

ANGLER GUIDE

Fishing in the Headwater Diversion watershed is mainly in the Castor River, Crooked Creek, Little Whitewater Creek, Bear Creek, Whitewater River, the Headwater Diversion and numerous small streams. A variety of fish species are available to anglers depending upon the location in the watershed and habitat. These include redhorse suckers, walleye, smallmouth bass, largemouth bass, spotted bass, crappie, sunfish, hybrid striped bass, white bass, channel catfish and flathead catfish.

The larger streams in the watershed are generally accessible by jon boats powered by small outboards and more readily by canoe. There is a 'No Wake' - idle speed only regulation on the Headwater Diversion Channel.

Water clarity can range from crystal clear in the upper Castor River to muddy in the lower Headwater Diversion Channel. In addition, Mississippi River stage can dramatically influence the flow in the Headwater Diversion Channel.

Spotted, smallmouth and largemouth bass can be caught from all the major streams. Smallmouth bass are most common in the clearer upstream sections while spotted bass will be found further downstream in the more turbid, lower gradient sections. Fish will range from 10-15 inches with the occasional larger fish. Look for smallmouth and spotted bass near rocks or woody cover adjacent to current. Largemouth bass can be caught throughout the watershed and will often average larger than smallmouth or spotted bass. Look for them in slow current or slack water very near woody cover. Some stream segments provide the opportunity to catch all three black bass species. Baits of choice include live minnows and crayfish caught from the stream. Best lures include soft plastics, minnow plugs, spinner and buzz baits.

White bass and hybrid striped bass make their appearance in the Headwater Diversion Channel in late winter and early spring. These fish move from the Mississippi River into the Channel to spawn. Fish are taken from the confluence to the Block Hole grade control structure located in southwest Cape Girardeau county. At the peak of the spawn, great catches can be made at the Block Hole as the structure generally prohibits further upstream movement. Two pound white bass are not uncommon. Hybrid striped bass are generally caught from the lower end of the Headwater Diversion. Fish to 15 pounds have been caught. Live bait of choice are large minnows. Lures include spinners, soft plastic jigs, small plugs and crankbaits.

Walleye are also present in the Castor River and Headwater Diversion Channel. These fish are most readily caught in late winter/early spring when these fish move to spawning sites. The Block Hole Access and Castor River near Zalma are productive fishing areas. Although most fish will be under 20 inches, fish over 10 lbs have been taken. Walleye are caught on live minnows and worms fished on or near the bottom. Jigs and small crankbaits are also effective. Fish are more active during cloudy, dark days and can be found in deeper holes.

Crappie are found in low numbers in the larger streams. However, when the Mississippi River rises during the spring crappie often move into the Headwater Diversion Channel to spawn. Fish are caught from around the log jams and the bases of flooded timber along the channel. This fishing often is short-lived but very productive while it lasts. Small jigs and minnows fished under a shallow-set float are very effective.

Channel catfish and flathead catfish are found in the larger streams. Fishing for catfish can be very good during times of rising water. Successful anglers use jug lines or set lines near woody cover or undercut banks in deep water. Channel catfish can be taken on worms, cut bait, crayfish, chicken liver or prepared baits. Flathead catfish are most often taken on live sunfish.

Redhorse suckers are abundant. Giggling is by far the most popular method of harvesting these fish. Generally, periods of cold weather with little rainfall will allow streams to clear and enable giggers to see fish.